

Guide to the Hartford Fair Rent Commission

The Fair Rent Commission is a City Commission that has the power to decide whether a rent increase or rent charged to a tenant is unfairly high.

What does the Fair Rent Commission do?

1. Provides information

The office at City of Hartford's Department of Development Services provides information to landlords and tenants regarding their individual rights and responsibilities. The staff responds to telephone calls, and accepts walk-ins and appointments.

2. Resolves Complaints

The Fair Rent Commission office receives complaints from tenants about rents charged for their apartments. The Commission's staff works with other city departments such as the Licenses and Inspections Division to investigate the complaints and to promote safe housing.

If the staff cannot mediate problems between the landlord and tenant, the Commission holds a public hearing. After a hearing, the Commission may order the landlord to reduce the rent. If the apartment needs repairs, the Commission may order the rent to be reduced or maintained at the current level until the landlord has made all needed repairs. The Commission may also order that rent increases be phased in gradually.

Who may file a complaint with the Fair Rent Commission?

Only tenants may file a complaint with the Commission. Any tenant who lives in Hartford may file a complaint. You do not need a written lease. You do not need a lawyer to file a complaint.

Under what conditions could you file a complaint?

- **Your landlord has demanded an increase that you believe is unfair**
- **Your landlord wants to charge you for utilities/services when they used to be included in the rent or are shared by all tenants**

How does the Commission make its decision?

The law lists 13 Factors to be considered:

- **The rents charged for similar apartments in the city or neighborhood**
- **The health and safety conditions of your apartment**
- **The number of bathtubs, or showers, toilets, and sinks in your apartment**
- **Services (such as utilities, furniture, furnishings and equipment) supplied by the landlord**
- **The size/ number of bedrooms in the apartment**
- **The repairs needed to make your apartment livable**
- **The amount of taxes and other expenses of the landlord**
- **Whether your apartment complies with the Hartford housing code and State statutes relating to health and safety**
- **Your income and whether there are other apartments you can afford**
- **What utilities you have in the unit, and whether you or the landlord pays for them**
- **Damages, other than ordinary wear and tear, which you have caused to the apartment**
- **How much the landlord has raised your rent in the past**
- **How much of the rent increase will be used to improve the apartment and building**

What happens after the hearing?

1. The Commission can decide that the rent increase is *fair*, and order you to pay it.
2. The Commission can decide that the rent increase is *unfair* and:

Set the rent at a fair level and order the landlord to accept that amount

Or

Decide that the rent increase has to be phased-in gradually

Or

Delay a rent increase until repairs are made.

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